

**TOURISTS' WILLINGNESS TO PAY FOR  
PROBOSCIS MONKEY WATCHING IN KLIAS  
WETLANDS**

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the requirements for the degree of Masters of  
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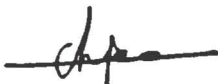
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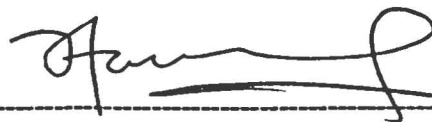


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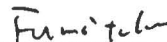
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## DECLARATION

The materials in this dissertation are original except for the quotations, summaries and references, which have been duly acknowledged.

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## ABSTRACT

This study is carried through statistical analysis to find out the impact of independent variables on the willingness of the tourists to pay for the Proboscis Monkey watching in Klias Wetlands, moderated by various demographic factors. The result of the research shows that the willingness of the tourists to pay for the Proboscis Monkey watching in Klias Wetlands is indeed having a close relationship with the independent variables, moderated by demographic factors.



## **ABSTRAK**

*Kajian ini dianalisis dengan menggunakan cara statistic, dengan tujuan membuktikan kewujudan perhubungan di antara unsur-unsur perbezaan bebas dengan kesanggupan para pelancong, dengan factor demografi sebagai pembolehubah. Keputusan daripada kajian ini membuktikan kewujudan perhubungan di antara unsur-unsur perbezaan bebas dengan kesanggupan para pelancong, dengan factor demografi sebagai pembolehubah.*



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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Overview

Malaysia is a South East Asian country blessed with many unique natural fauna and wildlife species. The state of Sabah, situated on the island of Borneo, is famous for its ecotourism. While other countries like Brunei and Singapore offer good tourist facilities like hotels and shopping malls, certain attractive tourist centers, typically the “green” types such as national parks in Malaysia, as a consequence of the small geographical size of their nations. Most tourists also prefer travelling to Malaysia compared to Brunei and Singapore as it is less costly to do so. Other countries do offer similar national parks like in Malaysia, such as Myanmar (Burma) and Cambodia, but many tourist facilities in these countries are still in their initial developing stage and often cannot satisfy large volume of tourists visiting their countries. On the other hand, a country filled with comparable good quality and cheaper tourist facilities like Malaysia, that has no SARS outbreak and terrorist activities, obviously stands out among its neighbors as the best travelling destination in South East Asia.

The state of Sabah is one of the places in Malaysia where visitors can discover abundant tropical forests and unique natural wildlife, such as the Proboscis Monkeys and Orangutans in the Klias Wetlands and the Kinabatangan region. For the dual purposes of wildlife conservation and promotion of



ecotourism, the government of Malaysia has established many national parks through the Parks Enactment (1984) (Timothy, 2003). In Sabah, they served as the protection zones for these precious forests and wildlife. The area called the Klias Forest Reserve in the Klias Peninsula of Sabah, home to the unique Proboscis Monkeys, has been recognized as a Class 1 protection forest since 1984. The Klias Forest Reserve includes a complex of diverse habitats such as freshwater swamp forest, nipah swamps, peat swamp forest and kerangas, secondary dryland forest and mangroves (Khaeril, 2004). The Proboscis Monkey (*Nasalis larvatus*) and the straw-headed bulbul (*Pycnonotus zelanicus*) are two animals in Klias Forest Reserve being listed as vulnerable under the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species and considered as Totally Protected and Protected under the Wildlife Conservation Enactment (1997) respectively (Melvin, 2003). For further details of Klias Wetlands, please refer to Appendix 3.

## **1.2 Research Problem**

The problem presented for this research is, "The effect of tourists' attitudes, behaviors, values and product attributes on the willingness of tourists to pay for ecotourism product – Proboscis Monkey watching in Klias Wetlands. As the state of Sabah is offering many ecotourism products to both foreign and domestic tourists, the main concern is on the willingness of the tourists to pay for such ecotourism products. The readiness of the tourists to pay for ecotourism products from Sabah is influenced by several factors. The understanding of the factors affecting the willingness of tourists to pay is crucial for the relevant authorities to improve the quality of these ecotourism products and develop appropriate strategies in promoting ecotourism more effectively.

This research will focus on the factors influencing the willingness of the tourists, both local and foreign, to pay for the ecotourism product – Proboscis Monkey sightseeing – in the Klias Reserve. The main topic of the research is mainly based on the willingness of the tourists to pay for such ecotourism product, demographic characteristics of tourists involved, such as age, income and education level of the tourists, as well as the independent variables of the attitudes and values of tourists and product attributes.

There are many tour operators running the ecotourism of proboscis monkey watching in Klias wetlands but only some of them are truly professionals specialized in this field. The price of Proboscis Monkey watching varies from approximate RM55 to below RM200. The different pricing is mainly due to transportation charges. Among the companies specialized in Proboscis Monkey watching ecotourism which have been actively participated in this research are:

**Beaufort Wetland Explorer Sdn. Bhd. (Co. No. 572789-U)**

Beaufort Wetland Explorer Sdn. Bhd. is an established local travel agency involved in ticketing for inbound and outbound tour packages in the region, especially Proboscis Monkey watching in the Klias and Garama Rivers. With its head office and business centre situated in ground floor of Wisma Sabah, Kota Kinabalu, the Company is headed by its Managing Director, Shirley Soon and supported by a team of hardworking and helpful staff.

The Company operates its Proboscis Monkey watching tour activity in a small palm oil plantation station with private jetty near the bank of the Klias River situated in outskirts of Beaufort Town. The customers of Beaufort Wetland Explorer Sdn. Bhd. include many South Koreans, Japanese, Chinese and some from Europe. The Company owns its river boats and provides foods to its clients while

they are involved in Proboscis Monkey watching. The company official website address is: <http://www.beaufortwetland.com>.

**Borneo Authentic Adventure Sdn. Bhd. (Co. No. 455114-W)**

Incorporated in 1997 as a private limited company to primarily cater and participate in the Tourism Industry with headquarters in Putatan Point, Putatan, Sabah. The Company has been granted a license as an inbound tour operator to offers traveler a comprehensive range of specially pre-design and tailored made tours as well as hotel and lodges accommodation in Sabah, Malaysian Borneo. Of course, that includes the Proboscis Monkey watching tours in Klias Wetlands.

The Company's clients include a wide range of leisure, special interest, college and school groups and adventure seekers. The Company has customized its tour programs to include as much or as little as the clients requires, ranging from a few days to month long stays. For example, parts of its special interest group are the 4WD excursions into the wilds of Borneo. In term of operation in Klias Wetlands, the Company conducts its tours in the area independently. For instance, the Company owns Tempurung Seaside Lodge and organizes its Klias River Cruise from its own private jetty. Currently, the Company caters many customers from Europe and Hong Kong in its Proboscis Monkey watching tour package.

Borneo Authentic Adventure Sdn. Bhd. is headed by its Executive Director, Ms. Arleeneanthi Lee Geok Choo @ Yanti, and supported by a team of highly dedicated staff with a wealth of knowledge on destinations in Borneo and the Company seeks experts on the more specialized areas of the industry. The company official website address is: <http://www.borneo-authentic.com>.



### **Only In Borneo Tours Sdn. Bhd. (Co. No. 691794 - W)**

Only In Borneo Tours Sdn. Bhd. is a travel operator in Sabah offering wetland tours with river cruising, white water rafting, mountain biking adventure, as well as nature and sightseeing tours within Sabah. With office situated in Wisma Sabah Building, Kota Kinabalu, the company is one of the best tour operators specializing in Proboscis Monkey watching via river cruise in Klias Wetland.

The Company has a team of dedicated management personnel, led by Managing Director, Mr. Nicholas Teo, with many years of experience behind him. The Company has well developed systems and facilities (including private transports, accommodation and cruise boats) to cater the demand from its clients on a wide range of activities from just sightseeing to adventure to action sports programs. The official website address of the company is: <http://www.onlyinborneo.com.my>.

**Table 1.1 Number of Tourists Taking Proboscis Monkey Watching in Klias Wetlands, Beaufort from 2004 - 2006**

<b>Company</b>	<b>Year 2006</b>	<b>Year 2005</b>	<b>Year 2004</b>
Only In Borneo Tours Sdn. Bhd.	Approx. 1,000 tourists *	Approx. 900 tourists *	Approx. 800 tourists *

\* Including both local and foreign tourists.

Prices range from RM55 per person (self-provided transport) or up to RM180 (transport provided by tour operator).

All Proboscis Monkey watching packages include afternoon tea, buffet dinner and river cruise. Accommodation not included.

### **1.3 Rationale of Study**

This study is aimed at identifying the crucial factors and attributes that will affect the willingness of the tourists to spend their money on such ecotourism product in Sabah, so that any future improvement on the ecotourism product can be carried out with the help of this study.

### **1.4 Scope of Study**

The scope of study is on the willingness of tourists to pay for ecotourism products – Proboscis Monkey sightseeing. The tour companies operating in the Klias Wetland area have been chosen as the case study. The subject of the research will be both the local and foreign tourists visiting to the Klias Wetland area via the tour agencies as mentioned, for Proboscis Monkey sightseeing purpose.

### **1.5 Objective of Study**

The aims of the research are:

- To find out the relationship between dependant variable (of tourists' willingness to pay for ecotourism products – proboscis monkey sightseeing) and independent variables (of visitors' values, attitudes and product attributes with demographic characteristics as moderators).
- To indicate the potential problems found in Proboscis Monkey watching in Klias Wetlands, facilitate the improvement of the quality of such ecotourism, as well as Proboscis Monkey conservation in the area.

### **1.6 Definition of terms**

The following terms will be explained with the purpose to ease the understanding of this study.

### **1.6.1 Willingness to pay**

The definition of willingness to pay is “the readiness of a person to spend an amount of money for a good or service”. For this study, the willingness to pay is the readiness of the tourists, both local and foreign, to spend their money on Proboscis Monkey sightseeing tours in Klias Wetland.

### **1.6.2 Ecotourism Products**

The ecotourism product in this study is referred to the proboscis monkey watching or sightseeing in Klias Wetland as offered by many tour agencies in Sabah. The Proboscis Monkey in Sabah is known as “*Nasalis Larvatus*” in their scientific name.

### **1.6.3 Product Attributes**

Product attributes are the nature of the product which will induce the tourists so that they are willing to pay for the said product. In this research, product attributes are the special feature (Proboscis Monkey with big nose), distinctiveness of proboscis monkeys in Sabah (only to be found in Borneo) and their rarity in the world.

### **1.6.4 Tourists' Attributes**

In the context of this research, tourists' attributes can be explained as the “perception of the tourists towards wildlife conservation”.

### **1.6.5 Tourists' Behaviors**

Tourists' behaviors in this study can be referred to as "preference of choosing holiday destination". Tourists may choose between having an ecotourism or non-ecotourism products.

### **1.6.6 Tourists' Values**

Tourists' values mean "the return they expected from the tour". In this research, the tourists' values are the expected value from Proboscis Monkey sightseeing tour, such as the satisfaction gained from viewing natural beauty – which is different from other types of tourisms that focus more on material and physical fulfillment, such as shopping and dining (Cleaver & Muller, 2002).

## **1.7 Background of Study Site**

The peat swamp forest is the most important of Malaysia's wetland types of biodiversity, area and biogeography, accounting for approximately 75% of total wetland area in the country. The majority of peat swamp forest in Malaysia is situated in the state of Sarawak. The peat swamp forest in Sabah only covers an area of 3,630 ha. While peat swamp forest is relatively small in Sabah, it is biologically significant because it is belived to be one of the last remaining intact tropical peat swamp forests in the northern part of Borneo (Zulhazman, 2005). The peat swamp forest of the Klias Peninsula in Sabah has been identified for management and conservation initiatives by the Malaysian Government. The study will focus on the willingness of both local and foreign tourists to pay for ecotourism activities conducted in the Klias swamp forest area by several private tour operators.



## **1.8 Willingness To Pay As Research Method**

With the relationship of independent variables moderated by demographical variables, the dependent variable (willingness to pay in this case) can be utilized as an effective tool in this study.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Introduction

A review of the literature is important to enhance the understanding of the research. A comprehensive understanding of the literature can also assist in knowing the factors influencing the willingness of tourists to pay for the ecotourism product – in this case, the Proboscis Monkey watching.

#### 2.2 Public, Quasi-private and Private Goods

Basically, goods can be divided into three types. They are public goods, quasi-private goods and pure private goods. Public goods are goods that can be consumed by one without affecting the consumption of the same goods by another person. In addition, one can enjoy public goods without being restricted (Kolstad, 2000).

In term of quasi-private and private goods, the two main differences between the two are tradable and ownership of property. Quasi-private goods, unlike private goods, cannot be exchanged freely on an organized market based on a competitive price. Moreover, quasi-private goods are collectively owned (Nyssolla and Agren, 2002).

Klias Wetland can be considered as a quasi-private because the public (including local and foreign tourists) are allowed to visit the area for ecotourism activity like proboscis monkey sightseeing. Furthermore, Klias Wetland is also not

a pure public good either, as private tour operators are permitted to compete with each and other in the area.

## **2.3 Wildlife Watching Tourism**

Ecotourism is characterized by sightseeing of natural geographical and biological unique flora and fauna not usually available in a congested city area. Wildlife watching tourism is a form of ecotourism that involves the tourists, the animals and plants in the national parks, in this case, the Proboscis Monkey. All wildlife sightseeing activities in Sabah are carried out by local private tour operators with the permission of the government.

Wildlife watching tourism can be in many forms. It may be included as part of a larger tour package, or simply a pure animal and plant sightseeing activity in the wild. In Sabah, most domestic tour operators will normally treat proboscis monkey watching as part of a larger tour package which often includes a river boat cruise, a traditional Malaysian buffet style meals, accommodation within the national parks or conservation area, and even an opportunity to meet the local indigenous people and enjoy their cultural dance and cuisine (Tapper, 2006). Nevertheless, wildlife watching tourism in Sabah, like elsewhere, is always credited with the task of wildlife conservation and protection, as well as creating career opportunities for indigenous communities.

### **2.3.1 The range of wildlife watching activities**

The growing interest and concern on our natural environments leads to a trend of growing demand of ecotourism. The conservation of wildlife creates flora and fauna sightseeing tour packages for group of individuals wishing to have a taste of natural beauty by simply watching

from a distance and even touching such animals and plants in some cases (Tapper, 2006). Most tourists involved in wildlife watching activities would like to observe the natural living of animals and plants in the wild habitats. Most of these activities will be undertaken in the national parks or protected reserves, with or without the guidance of relevant authorities. In the research, such activity is referred to the Proboscis Monkey watching in Klias Wetland with the assistance of local private tour operators.

### **2.3.2 The demand for wildlife watching tourism: market size and main market groups**

With the inflow of more and more foreign tourists coming from countries like Japan, South Korea, Germany, Netherlands, Australia, China and others to Sabah, there is a great potential for the Malaysian state to develop its own style of ecotourism to cater for the taste of tourists from abroad. For instance, the Proboscis Monkey sightseeing in Klias Wetland or Tabin Wildlife Conservation Center, which is unique in nature and cannot be recreated in other countries.

### **2.3.3 Effects of disturbance from tourism on wildlife**

The growing inflow of tourists into a wildlife conservation area will certainly to have a negative impact on the flora and fauna in that area (Tapper, 2006). Loud noise caused by motor vehicles and human (such as some over-excited tourists from South Korea), rubbish left by irresponsible tourists in the national parks, vandalism and even touching and feeding the wild animals can hamper the natural growth and

balance of the wildlife habitats. The heavy build-up of pressure from tourism activities may even lead to the possible risk of extinction of the wildlife, such as through the spread of diseases as a consequence of frequent human contacts in the conservation area.

## **2.4 Ecotourism**

Ecotourism can be simply defined as “any tourism activity with connection to the environment”. Ecotourism are closely associated with activities conducted far from human encroachment area, wild animals and plants observation and even a visit to the local indigenous community (Bingku, 2006; Valentine, 1993; Orams, 1995; Boyd and Butler 1996; Blamey, 1997; Swarbrooke and Homer 1999). However, normal ecotourism must be supported by easy access to the destination, often supplemented with sustainable living and accommodation facilities. Hence, ordinary ecotourism can often be taken up by casual tourists, even though they are not serious in conservation. Like any other tourism activities, ecotourism can help in creating job opportunities (typically for indigenous people) and conservation of natural flora and fauna in a country if it has been conducted properly. Nevertheless, problems do occur and there are many arguments against the benefits of ecotourism. In fact, normal ecotourism is the one that has been blamed for putting tremendous pressure on the wildlife habitats and eventually endanger the well-being of the environment. Nevertheless, with the gradual improvement in the public and living facilities, ordinary ecotourism is fast becoming the main theme of tourism in the Malaysian state of Sabah due to its exceptional geographical landscape and domestic flora and fauna.



## **2.5 'Hard Ecotourism'**

Hard ecotourism is referred to "ecotourism in a serious manner". Most of the participants consist of biologists, botanists and others, who will devote most of their time in scientific observation of wildlife in their habitats – this means that hard ecotourism will normally take longer period of time than ordinary tourism (Finucane & Dowling, 2006). Unlike normal ecotourism, hard ecotourism will be carried out strictly according to conservation rules, such as prohibition from feeding wild animals and making loud noise during any on site observation. In addition, those who involved in hard ecotourism must ensure that they will not pollute the visited area so as to guarantee that the environment will not be disturbed. Hence, hard ecotourism is often carried out in small groups by environmentalists venturing into a distant area far from human encroachment, regardless of easy and convenient road access and comfortable accommodation facility or not, as the main aim of hard ecotourism is for scientific purpose. Hard ecotourism does happen in Sabah but in a smaller scale, mostly concentrated in the remote Danum Valley area.

## **2.6 Eco-tourists**

Eco-tourists are those people who involved themselves in either ordinary ecotourism or hard ecotourism (Blamey & Braithwaite, 1997; Blamey & Hatch 1998). Eco-tourists are often lovers of natural beauty (but not entirely necessary) and range from normal casual tourists who are fond of photo taking to hardcore types of environmentalists like biologists and botanists. The majority of eco-tourists in Sabah are non-Malaysian from other developed countries like the United Kingdom, Germany, Japan, South Korea, the United States of America, and others, who are normally well-educated and imbued with greater

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